CIA Is Accused of Payoff Offer To Clear Agent Sued for Slander

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The Central Intelligence Agency allegedly offered to "pay off" a man labeled by one of its agents as a Soviet spy in order to get him to drop his slander suit against the agent.

But, according to court papers filed in Federal court in Baltimore, the man refused to "auction his honor" and "the settlement negotiations broke down because one of the conditions of the settlement required an outright

The court papers related no more details of this strange twist last December in the slander suit brought by Eerik Heine of Rexford, Canada, against a fellow emigre from Soviet Estonia, Juri Raus, who is a Bureau of Public Roads engineer in Washington.

Heine, seeking $110,000 in damages, protests that Raus sought to discredit him in Estonian emigre groups by calling him a Soviet intelligence agent. Without disputing this charge, Raus seeks to have the suit dismissed on the ground that he was acting under CIA orders.

In a startling move made to support motion, CIA Deputy Director Richard Helms in court affidavits confirmed that Raus was a CIA operative. Helms said he was a source of information on Estonia and Estonian emigres and had performed "specific assignments" as well.

Heine's attorneys have challenged Raus's bid for "privilege" (immunity from prosecution) on grounds that the CIA—set up by Congress as a foreign intelligence agency—intruded into internal security matters.

The CIA had no comment yesterday on the Heine allegation. One official source said, however: "Maybe the CIA got a little out of line. It wouldn't be the first time."

At issue is whether the CIA, in touching emigre affairs, was poaching on the "internal threat" area reserved by law to the FBI or was properly performing its "foreign threat" mission.

U.S. Chief in Bangkok

Reuters

BANGKOK, Thailand, April 22 — U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Harold K. Johnson arrived here today from South Vietnam for talks with American officials of the military assistance group.